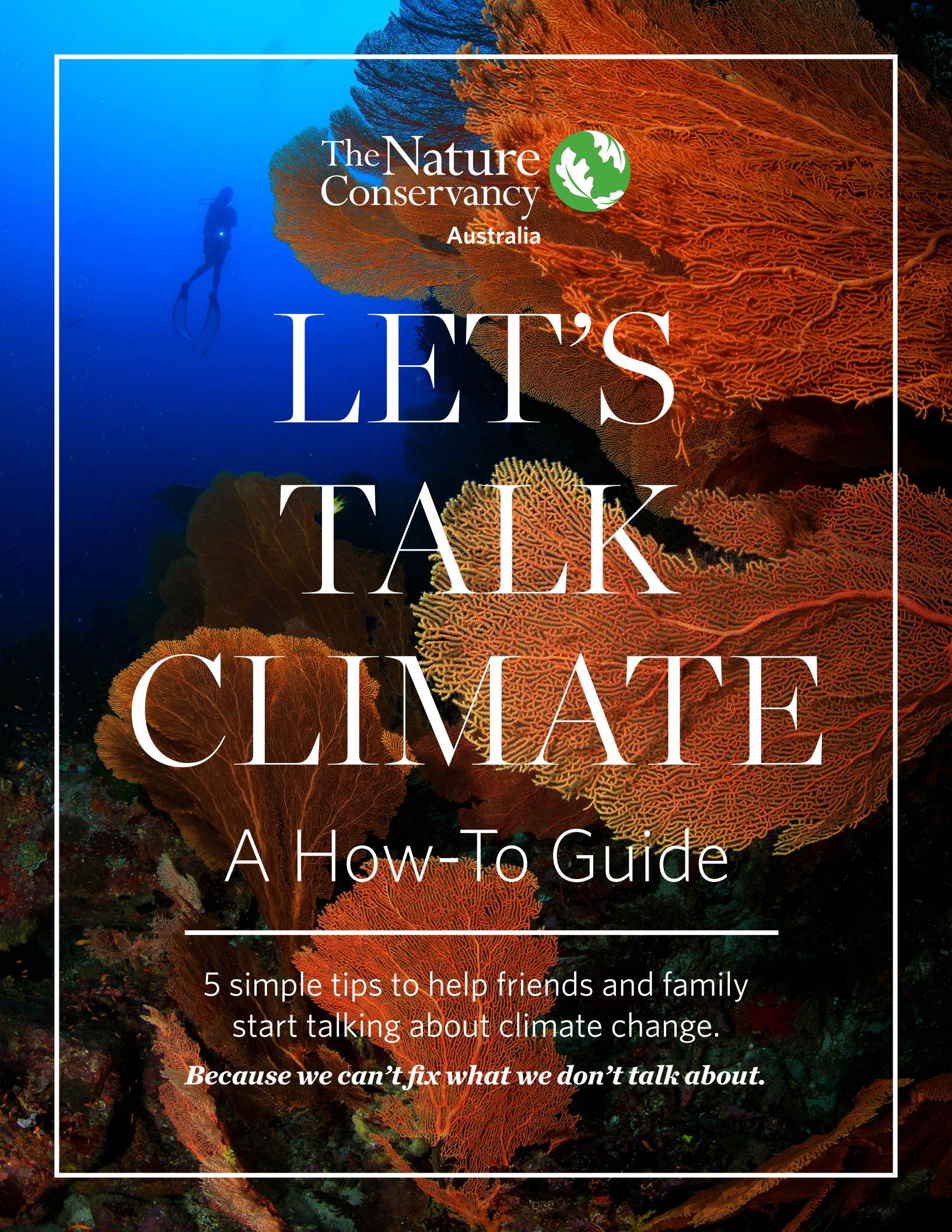

The Nature Conservancy
Australia
LET'S TALK CLIMATE
A How-To Guide
5 simple tips to help friends and family start talking about climate change.
Because we can't fix what we don't talk about.

You're here because you get it.

You know that the science on climate change is clear. You know it's happening — here and now. And you know we have to act TODAY if we're going to change course for our planet.

The good news is that you have a lot of company:
7 in 10 Australians want Australia to be a global leader in finding solutions to climate change.

But, despite that, less than half of us talk about it with friends or family with any consistency.

That's a big disconnect. Because we can't tackle the problem if we don't talk about it. And not talking about it is more harmful than you might think — research shows silence, especially from people who are expected to speak out, is perceived as agreement with misinformation.

The Nature Conservancy Australia created this guide to help get the conversation started. It's easy and can help show those around you that climate change isn't a niche issue — it's a real concern that everyone can help do something about.

Let's get started.

5 SIMPLE TIPS for starting the conversation

1. Meet people where they are.

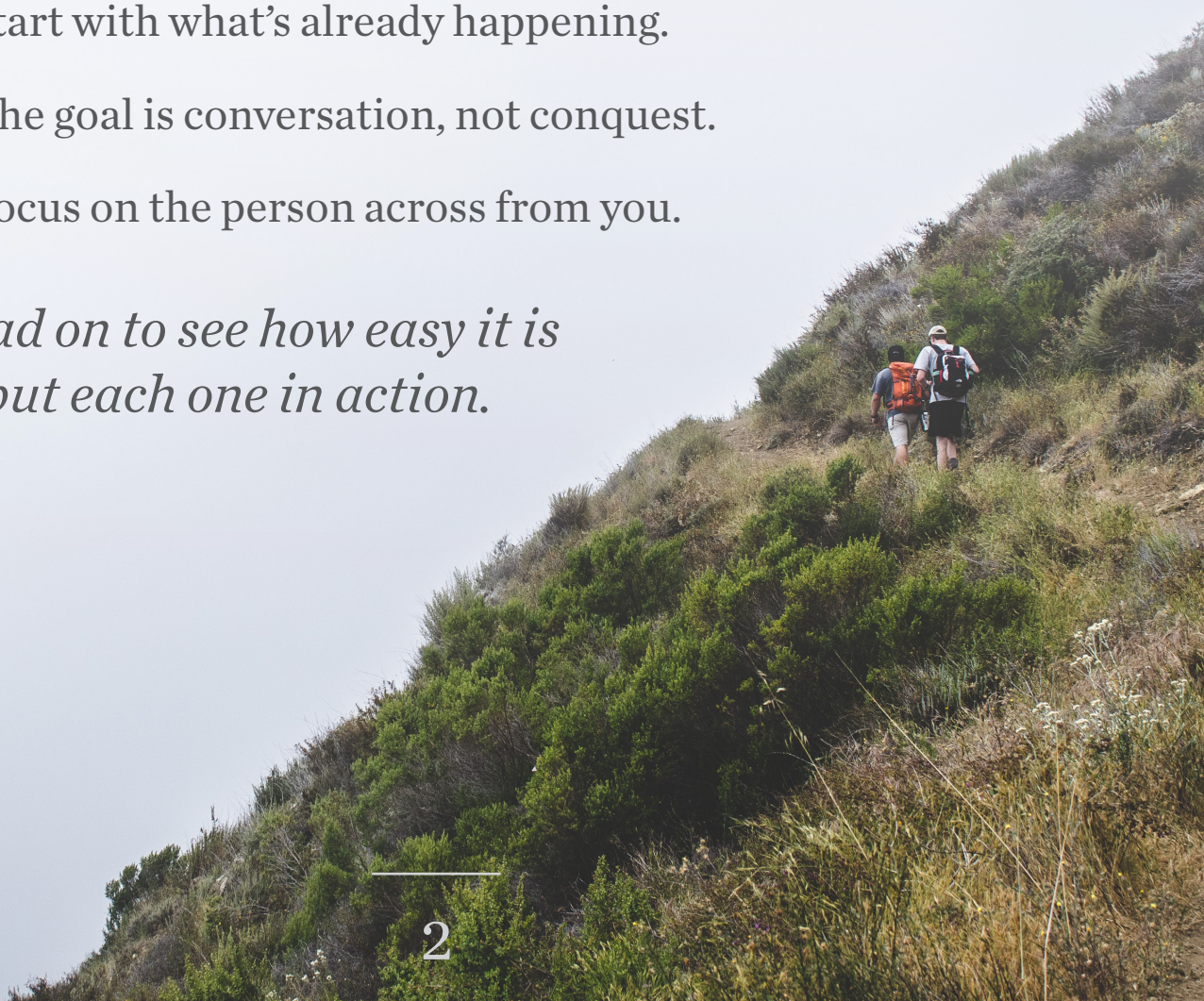
2. Connection outweighs facts.

3. Start with what's already happening.

4. The goal is conversation, not conquest.

5. Focus on the person across from you.

Read on to see how easy it is to put each one in action.



TIP #1

Meet people where they are.

Start the conversation where the person you're talking to is on the subject — not where you are or where *you* think they *should* be.

People are more interested in focusing on what they value and what's relevant to their own lives, rather than abstract theory. So if they're most concerned with hurricanes, start there. If they're interested in polar ice caps, that's fine too. If they want to talk jobs and family, that's also a good starting point.

It's important to listen to their perspective with patience and interest and not launch into a canned speech. Having a conversation with someone who's wrapped up in their own agenda and ignores what you're saying is frustrating for everyone involved. Listening — true, active listening without distractions — improves the likelihood that the person you're talking to will react positively once it's your turn to talk.

Be with them in whatever place they are and begin your conversation there.

Be patient with the person you're talking to and draw them into the conversation:

- ***"Can you tell me more about that?"***
- ***"I want to be sure I understand where you're coming from...[Reflect back the point you aren't clear on]"***

And understand that he or she may require more than one conversation to open up to what you're trying to say.

- ***"This isn't something we need to agree on today. I'm just glad we're talking about it."***

TIP #2

Connection outweighs facts.

Science and the objective truth are important. But facts alone don't move hearts. Stories, on the other hand, do.

And moving people emotionally is the key to getting people to act for the common good. Studies show that the chemicals released in the brain when one is feeling connected cause people to be more collaborative.

This means you can combat climate change simply by having a conversation that causes the other person to feel something. So don't be afraid to show emotion and talk about how climate change has impacted people and places you love.

Connect your perspective to the values you share with the person you're talking with. It's this sense of shared identity, of connection, that makes what you say more impactful. Look for opportunities to find those connections on shared values and experiences.

Here are some ideas for drawing a connection and shared identity:

- ***"Remember the beach our grandma loved to take us to? It's just a sliver of what it used to be because the ocean's gotten higher there."***
- ***"You have family in the Blue Mountains. I'm sure all the uncontrollable bushfires there make you scared for them."***
- ***"Last summer the summer camp we both sent our kids to had to close because it was over 49 degrees for a whole week."***
- ***"You're a generous person and the first one to make donations when there's a bushfire or a flood. Don't you think there are so many more extreme catastrophes like that in recent years?"***

TIP #3

Start with what's already happening.

Immediacy is powerful, and this is especially true when it comes to engaging friends and family on climate change. When you talk how climate change is affecting places nearby that they know, people are more likely to want to engage and do something about it. So make sure people understand what they personally have to lose when it comes to the impacts of a changing climate.

People are also most open to acknowledging climate change when they observe its effects in local events — so point out growing season changes, storms, heat levels, etc. This is true even with climate skeptics.

Also, be balanced in how you use hope and fear. What we know from the research is that people do need to have some notion of what's at stake. But sounding the alarm alone is not as effective as when you offer both a problem and a means to take action.

How do you connect climate change to immediate concerns? Ask people about things they care about here and now:

- ***"Have you noticed [world event/weather/climate-related thing] — how do you think climate change impacted this?"***
- ***"I've been thinking about [x] and that it's probably because of climate change. What do you think?"***
- ***"Is [x thing that the person likes —fishing, travel, gardening, exercising outside] different for you because of changes in the climate?"***

Simply put, ask open-ended questions that are rooted in their experiences or your shared experiences with them.

TIP #4

The goal is conversation, not conquest.

A person rarely reverses a previously held opinion or makes a commitment to action before someone else's eyes. We usually like to present ourselves as firm in our convictions and try to avoid being "wrong" about something.

It can be tempting to keep pushing at it until the other person gives in on a topic like climate change. But this isn't a competition.

The truth is, once you set up the conversation as an argument, it is very hard to get out of the oppositional mindset. You'll get further if you set up your conversation as shared questions based in curiosity, as opposed to a debate where you each present competing opinions.

Just because someone isn't persuaded after your first talk doesn't mean they won't be later. In fact, research shows that people are often more open to changing their minds after a conversation, not less.

The goal is to increase the amount of conversation, not to create converts or keep score.

People appreciate being heard.

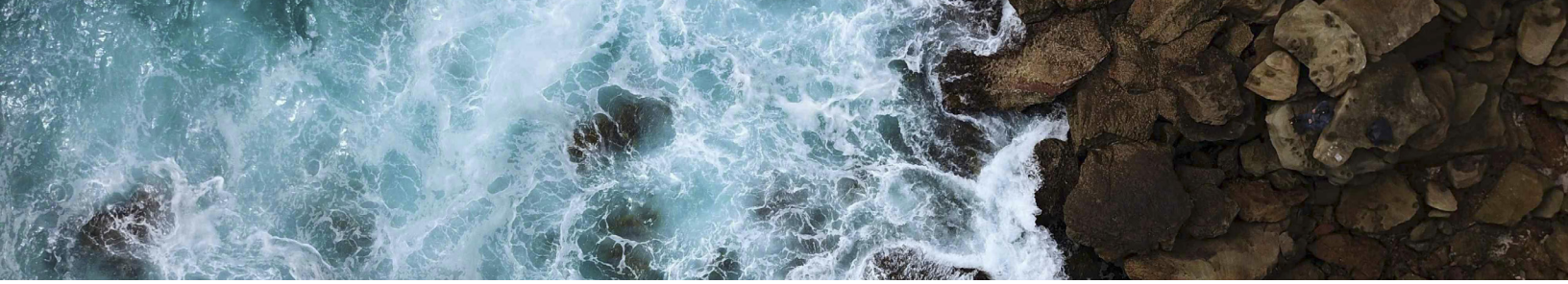
Pay attention to how you're engaging and if you've slipped into rebutting too much, step back and say:

- ***"I've been talking too much. I really want to hear more about what you think. Tell me more about why you feel [reference a point the person made]."***

In fact, being vulnerable can put the other person at ease:

- ***"For me, sometimes it takes a while to sort out what I think about things. [Give an example of when you changed your mind]"***

No one likes admitting they were wrong, so sharing an instance where you changed your mind about something will give the other person permission to do so as well.



TIP #5

Focus on the person across from you.

And remember *they are a person.*

They have thoughts and feelings and needs just like you. You may not agree with their views, and some of their ideas may be factually incorrect. But anger or name calling never positively persuaded anyone of anything.

If you're confused about how they could do something or say something or think something, ask them. The answer might surprise you.

We also know that who is talking about climate change is important. People trust those in their social circles the most. They are more easily persuaded by family and friends, and they're also more likely to stop believing misinformation after hearing correct information from people they know personally and trust.

In a world where there is already more than enough combativeness, your commitment to simple humanity, compassion, respect and kindness will stand out.

Be aware and check yourself for:

- **Interrupting**
- **Name calling or villainizing (either the person you're talking to or their ideas)**
- **Non-verbal cues that are insulting (like eye rolling)**
- **Raising your voice**

Every connected conversation MATTERS.

Yes, *every* one of them.

When you're finished with your conversation, maybe you'll feel like you didn't make a difference — but you did. In fact, we know that even if our initial reaction to a statement is negative, the more we hear about something, the more likely we are to view it more positively, whatever it is.

People often believe a thing not because they know it is true, but because it is what they believe everyone else around them thinks. That makes perceived social norms critical in engaging others on climate.

Every climate conversation you have demonstrates to people in your social circle that concern for climate change *is* the norm.

It is especially important to talk about climate change in communities where support for climate action is perceived as low. Knowing that people like you — someone they know and like — believe climate change is important reduces the perception that there's a gap between those who do and do not support climate action.

Showing that climate change is important enough for you to talk about will help change hearts and minds. Plus, you'll make it easier for others around you to talk about it as well.

THANK YOU for standing with The Nature Conservancy Australia and doing your part to tackle climate change and help protect our one and only Earth.

You're ready.
Now start with just one conversation.

Want to LEARN MORE?

Like everything The Nature Conservancy does, this guide is grounded in science. Research we drew on for these tips and recommendations includes:

Climate of the Nation 2020 Benchmark Report by Audrey Quicke and Ebony Bennett, The Australia Institute

The Passive Activist: Negative Consequences of Failing to Confront Antienvironmental Statement by A.M. Czopp in *Ecopsychology*

Who is Changing Their Mind About Global Warming and Why? by K.S. Deeg A. Leiserowitz, E. Maibach, J. Kotcher, and J. Marlon

Climate and environmental science denial: A review of the scientific literature published in 1990-2015 by K.E. Bjornberg, M. Karlsson, M. Gilek, and S.O. Hansson in *Journal of Cleaner Production*

The Listener Sets the Tone: High-Quality Listening Increases Attitude Clarity and Behavior-Intention Consequences by G. Itzchakov, K.G. DeMarree, A.N. Kluger, Y. Turjeman-Levi in *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*

Personal Stories Can Shift Climate Change Beliefs and Risk Perceptions: The Mediating Role of Emotion by Abel Gustafson, Matthew T. Ballew, Matthew H. Goldberg, Matthew J. Cutler, Seth A. Rosenthal & Anthony Leiserowitz in *Communication Reports*

The Neurobiology of Collective Action, by P.J. Zak, and J.A. Barraza in *Frontiers of Neuroscience*

How Brain Biases Prevent Climate Action by M.W. King

"Act on Climate Change": An Application of Protection Motivation Theory by M. Cismaru, R. Cismaru, T. Ono, and K. Nelson in *Social Marketing Quarterly*

Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence by W. Wood in *Annual Review*

Discussing global warming leads to greater acceptance of climate science by M. H. Goldberg, S. van der Linden, E. Maibach, and A. Leiserowitz in *PNAS*

Misinformation and its Correction: Continued Influence and Successful Debiasing by U.K. H. Ecker, S. Lewandowsky, C. M. Seifert, N. Schwarz, and J. Cook in *SAGA Journals*

The Art of Interpersonal Persuasion by R.H. Hull in *The ASHA Leader*

How (Not) to Change Someone's Mind by R. Catapano, Z. Tormala, and D.D. Rucker

How Deep Listening Can Make You More Persuasive by E. Lempinen

Descriptive Social Norms as Underappreciated Sources of Social Control by R. B. Cialdini in *Psychometrika*

Psychological Barriers to Bipartisan Public Support for Climate Policy by L. Van Boven, P.J. Ehret, and D.K. Sherman in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*

Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure by R.B. Zajonc in *Psychology*

On Believing What We Remember, by I. Begg, V. Armour, and T. Kerr in *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*

The Social Function of Rationalization: An Identity Perspective by J. Van Bavel, A. Sternisko, E. A. Harris, and C. Robertson in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*

Beliefs About Others' Global Warming Beliefs: The Role of Party Affiliation and Opinion Deviance by M. T. Ballew, S. A. Rosenthal, M. H. Goldberg, A. Gustafson, J. E. Kotcher, E.W. Maibach, and A. Leiserowitz *in Journal of Environmental Psychology*

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